DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 529 FL 018 611

AUTHOR Tabuki, Masatoshi
TITLE Several Aspects in the Adult L2 Learning.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; *Interlanguage; Japanese; *Language Processing; Language Research; Language Typology; Phonology; *Second Language Learning; Semantics; Sociolinguistics; Syntax; *Transfer of Training; Uncommonly Taught Languages

ABSTRACT

An investigation is conducted into the hypothesized notion of the interlanguage system and its effect on language transfer. The interlanguage system is composed of: internal factors (syntax, semantics, and phonology); external factors (sociological and psychological); and the typology of the native language. The investigation looks into: (1) language transfer based on interlanguage along with the internalizing processes; (2) typological classification of languages looking at an example from the Japanese language; and (3) the sociological environment. (GLR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED321529

Several Aspects in the Adult L2 Learning

Masatoshi Tabuki

1.Introduction

When an L2 learner tries to acquire a target language, both internal and external factors are involved. Internal factors refer to linguistic components such as syntax, semantics and phonology. Language transfer is observed in these three components from the native language to the target language. External factors refer to sociological and psychological aspects of L2 learning. At the same time the typology of a native language explains the characteristics of the native language as well as the physical proximity between a native language and a target language. I accept the hypothesized notion of the interlanguage system, which can reasonably account for language transfer.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate (i) Language transfer based on Interlanguage along with Internalizing processes and (ii) Typological classification of languages looking at an example from the Japanese language. (iii) Sociological environment is discussed in the last section.

The following diagram can be hypothesized to account for Lan-

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. Tabuki
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

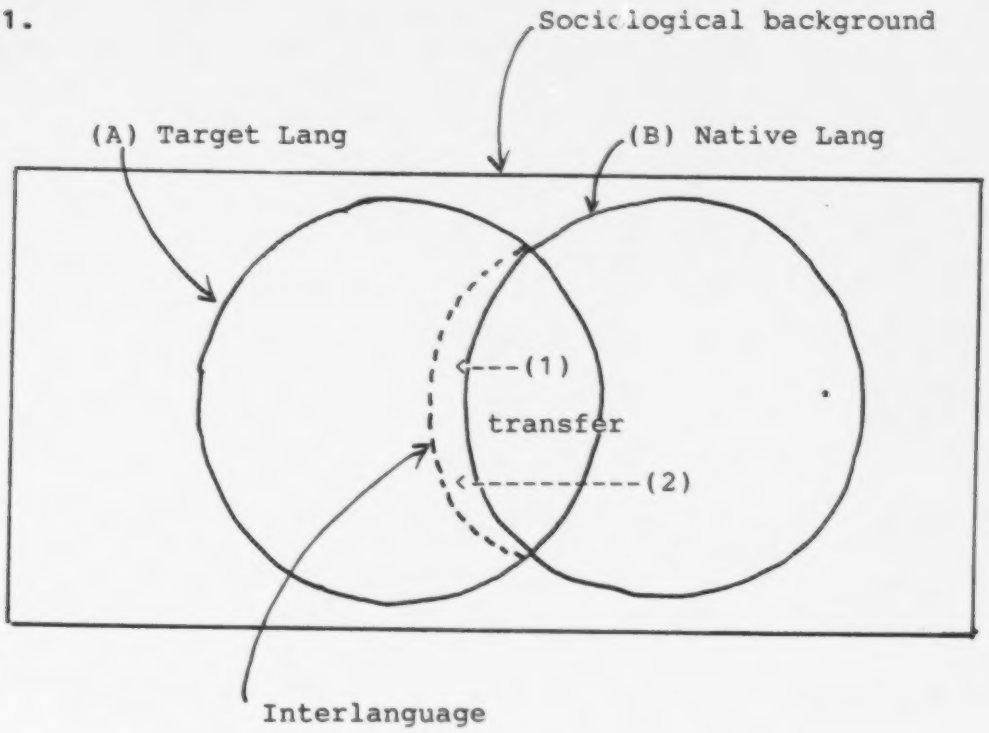
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL 018611

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

guage transfer, Interlanguage and Sociological background based on a target language and a native language.

Figure 1.



Each circle (a target language and a native language) is bound syntactically, semantically, and phonologically. And each circle is included in each sociological background, which is reflected on its language performance. These circles are more or less overlapped so that we can build up the interlanguage system as a hypothesized device based on the overlapped portion. The dotted portion indicates Interlanguage whose shape is flexible

and unstable and changing all the time as Tarone (1979) characterizes Interlanguage as 'chameleon'. Interlanguage is different in quality from a target language, because Interlanguage has its root in the native language, not in the target language. The dotted portion either extends its shape gradually far into the circle (A) as time goes by or stops growing in terms of 'fossilization' as Selinker (1972) claims. The two arrows mean Language transfer. Arrow (1) moves from Interlanguage by stretching, distorting or overgeneralizing a rule or a form of Interlanguage, while arrow (2) is penetrated by rules or items from a native language in Adjemian's (1976) sense.

2. Transfer and Interlanguage

It is generally accepted by both theoreticians and language teachers that when attempting to communicate in a second language, learners often transfer elements of their native language onto the speech pattern of the target language. Superficially lots of native transfer elements can be observed syntactically, semantically and phonologically when a L2 learner speaks or writes a target language. That is why the definition of transfer involves various kinds of factors such as psychological, sociological and the typology of the target language and the native language, etc. In essence, transfer, a traditional term drawn from the psychology of learning, is con-

sidered as the imposition of previously learned patterns onto a new learning situation. In general, it is claimed that 'the learning task A will affect the subsequent learning of task B.' (Jackovits (1970))

For example, if a learner generalizes on a pattern of his native language, to form an ungrammatical target language pattern, do we then transfer? Gass (1979) answers, 'In the example given, the end result in the learner's interlanguage is not a pattern mirroring the native language, but rather is an extension of a native language pattern.'

Larry Selinker (1972) discuses the interlanguage in terms of the psychology of second language learning. They hypothesize the concept of latent language structure, which (a) is an already formulated arrangement in the brain, (b) is the biological counterpart to universal grammar, and (c) is transformed by the infant in the realized structure of a particular grammar in accordance with certain maturational stages. However, Larry Selinker's (1972) study ends up a mere theoretical speculation about idealized L2 learning. He did not consider the typological categorization of languages such as linguistic distance between a native language of the speaker and his target language. It is generally accepted that a native speaker of Japanese learning English as a second language has a longer distance linguistically than a native speaker of German learning English in terms of language typology. What is the age of L2 learner is another

story here.

3. Language Typology

Li and Thompson (1976) give us interesting data about the classification of languages. They hold that it is more meaningful to divide languages typologically not in terms of the traditional SVO/ SOV/ etc. word order distinction but rather on the basis of whether languages manifest as basic grammatical relations as Subject-Predicate on one hand or Topic-Comment on the other.

We quote here from their article;

'The subject has a minimal discourse function in contrast with topic. The topic but not necessarily the subject, is discourse-dependent, serves as the center of attention in the sentence, and must be definite. As for N-V relations and grammatical processes, it is the subject rather than topic that figures prominently. Thus, subject is normally determined by the verb and selectionally related to the verb; and the subject are not shared by the topic. In conclusion, the topic is a discourse notation whereas the subject is to a greater extent a sentence-initial notation.'

Li and Thompson provide a four-way typological distinction.

1. Subject-prominent Languages (e.g. English)
2. Topic-prominent Languages (e.g. Mandarin)
3. Both subject-prominent and topic-prominent (e.g. Japanese)
4. Neither subject-prominent nor topic-prominent (e.g. Tagalog)

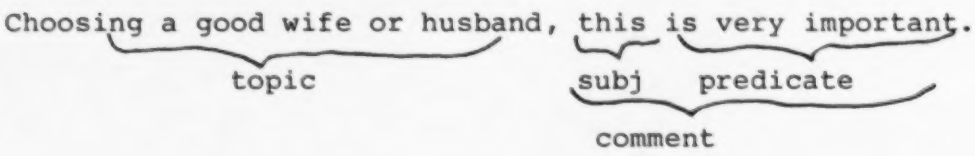
For example, a sentence like "John prefers Picasso." can be transformed to a topic comment construction such as "As for modern art, John prefers Picasso." The English translation of a typical Mandarin topic-comment sentence might be "Airplanes, the 747 is big."

Schacher and Rutherford (1979) provide us with several typical examples from Japanese and Chinese subjects in relation with Li and Thompson's article as the following;

1. It is believed that sweet flag leaves contain the power to expel sickness and evil. (Japanese)
2. It is a tendency that such friendly restaurants become less in the big city. (Japanese)
3. There is a tire hanging from the roof served as their playground. (Chinese)

According to Schacher (1979), the Japanese learners produced an average of 3 extraposition sentences in every 4 compositions whereas learners with other native language backgrounds produced only an average of 2 extraposition sentences. In topic-prominent

languages like Chinese and Japanese (which is also subject-prominent), a sentence is usually composed of topic first and comment. Before something becomes a topic, it has to be introduced, or raised to consciousness. An introduced referent that is to become a topic is therefore itself 'new' and will appear in the comment. According to Schacher and Rutherford in above examples (1) through (3), the underlined parts serve to introduce new topics and the other parts of the sentences are generic statements concerning general facts and beliefs. The big difference between topic-prominent languages and subject-prominent languages are described as the following;



I believe that this kind of phenomenon is not limited only to a speaking pattern in a sentence but affects a writing style, the ways of thinking, the ways of behavior and a life pattern to some degree. For example, Japanese writing style is basically composed of "ki""shou""ten""ketsu"--(1) topic (2) improvement of the topic (3) comment (4) conclusion. New information or what a writer wants to present usually appear in the latter half of a whole writing. The Japanese are predisposed or used to this pattern and know how to reasonably give attention in the process of

reading. We can say that the whole society of Japan functions based on this pattern; The Japanese are likely to say what they really want to say in the last moment of a conversation.

In short, the most important thing occurs (or appear) last in the Japanese society, while the most important thing occurs first in English speaking societies. We can imagine how big contradictions occur when these two patters get together.

4. Further Consideration about Transfer and Interlanguage

The reports concerning language transfer have varied greatly among researchers. For example, George (1972) claims that one-third of the errors in his corpus could be accounted for by means of negative transfer from their native language, while Dulay and Burt (1975) report that less than 5 % of the errors found in their corpus could be attributed to patterns in the native languages of their subjects.

However, if we apply the interlanguage system to language learning as the developing intuition towards a target language, the language errors can be accounted for as a difference in shape of the interlanguage. Why are then errors observed in an individual person for a long period of time as in French uvular /r/ in the interlanguage? Selinker (1972) explains this phenomena in terms of the fossilization of interlanguage. He further claims many of this phenomena reappear in IL performance

when the learner's attention is focused on new and different intellectual subject matter or when he is in the state of anxiety or other excitement and when he is in the state of extreme relaxation.

I as a L2 learner of English often observe this kind of phenomena after I have discussed with my wife about very emotional things, after I have read Japanese books for a long time, while I am frustrated, on Monday after having spent week ends at home, and when I talk about Japanese things (tracing back old memories). In those cases, my English does not come across in conversation or my utterances are likely to lose the main flow of a conversation.

Let us think about Interlanguage some more. Adjemian (1977) characterizes interlanguage as 'permeable'. She claims that permeability of ILs explains why learners transfers grammatical properties from their native language and why they can generalize or otherwise distort target language properties in an effort to communicate. Her article would be valuable in terms of theoretical consideration of interlanguage, but does not provide us with the properties of the interlanguage system and the ways of internalizing the rules of a target language into the interlanguage system in relation with the rules of a native language.

5. Internalizing Process

Barry McLaughlin (1979) produced an interesting model about methodological considerations of language processing. He divides the means of the internalizing processes into two;

(1) **Language Acquisition**, which is primary subconscious, is not influenced by overt correction and is very similar to primary language acquisition in children.
(2) **Language Learning**, which involves the conscious representation of pedagogical rules and is influenced by teaching and error detection.

Language acquisition means subconscious language learning in an implicit way, while language learning means conscious language learning in an explicit way. "Acquisition" is said to correspond to the tacit knowledge of a native speaker in Chomsky's sense, and on the other hand, "Learning" is said to be the conscious internalization of the rules of a language by monitoring one's own performance and correcting that performance so that it corresponds with what has been learned. McLaughlin (1979) characterizes acquisition as subconscious learning based on 'feel' and learning as conscious learning based on 'rule'.

The existence of acquisition is evidenced by Braine's (1971) finding that adult subjects, who attended to and repeated sen-

tences in an artificial, meaningless language, were able to discriminate 'grammatical' from 'anomalous' sentences with a high degree of accuracy. When we look at these processes from the behavior's point of view, there are also two processes; **A controlled process** and **an automatic process.**

According to Mclaughlin (1979), 'a controlled process is a temporary sequence of nodes activated by the individual utilizing short-term store, while an automatic process is a sequence of nodes that always become active in response to a particular input configuration and that is activated without the necessity of active control or attention by the individual.'

Controlled processes are regarded as the "stepping stones" for automatic processing. In short, controlled process involves conscious processing while automatic process is done subconsciously. However, these two processes including acquisition and learning processes are not clear-cut cases in the actual world. We cannot speak even our native language just with an automatic process. Some of the processes would be overlapped or tangled. Moreover,the amount of using each one of these processes greatly depends on individuals; Some may be "under-users" and others may be "over-users" in one of these processes.

6. Sociological Factors

Let us think about sociological factors occupying the back-

ground of the two circles in Figure 1. H. Douglass Brown (1979) reported research in three related areas--stages of acculturation, anomie, social distance, which help to define a socioculturally determined critical period for successful second language acquisition. Stages of acculturation are made up of (1) euphoria (2) culture shock (3) vacillating recovery (4) full recovery. He hypothesizes that mastery or skillful fluency in a second language occurs somewhere at the beginning of the third stage of acculturation and learners might not be successful in their mastery of the language if they have proceeded beyond early stage-three without accomplishing the linguistic mastery.

Schumann (1976) describes social distance as consisting of a number of parameters; dominance, integration pattern, cohesiveness, congruence, attitude, and length of residence. He uses three parameters to describe hypothetically "good" and "bad" language learning situations and illustrate each situation with two cross-cultural conte.

These sociological factors affect the L2 learner's environment and then each learner's psychological aspect. We have to take two perspectives into consideration; External environment (e.g. sociological factors) around L2 learners and Internal factors (e.g. linguistic components or psychological condition) when thinking about L2 learning. Brown's (1979) theory would be substantiated by the following example;

Case 1: One L2 learner has already acquired a high linguistic skill of a target language before going to the country where the target language is spoken. In the L2 learner's country, every possible kind of material concerning the target language is available such as literature, newspapers, and even the speakers of the target language. And he utilized every possible material to acquire the language skill by consciously leaning in his country. Now he finds his linguistic skill of the target language influenced by sociological (and psychological) factors he never experienced before, after he arrived in the target language country. His linguistic skills acquired before is backsliding and is being modified by passing through the four stages. (personal data)

Some L2 learner might not feel any one of these acculturation stages because of the similarity of the native language culture, and some might feel more than four stages on the way to the stage (4) 'full recovery'. However, I believe that these stages greatly influence the L2 learner's psychology and the degree of mastery of a target language.

7. Conclusion

We have observed several aspects in language learning and have found that the interlanguage system is a convenient device

in dealing with internal processes between a native language and a target language. We have also found that L2 learning must be observed from two perspectives; External perspective and Internal perspective. I believe that sociological factors play a more important role in language learning than we imagine. Further study from these aspects would be needed in consideration with the present situation in the world.

references

Adjemian, Christian. 1976. 'On the nature of interlanguage system', Language Learning 26: 297-320.

Braine, M.D.S. 1971. 'On two types of models of the internalization', In Slobin, D.I. (ed.), New York: Academic Press.

Brown, H.D., 1980. 'The optimal distance model of a second language acquisition', Tesol Quartery 14: 157-64.

Dulay, H., Burt, M., and Krashen, S., 1982. Language Two, Oxford University Press, New York.

Gass, Susan. 1979. 'Language transfer and universal grammatical relations', Language Learning 29: 327-44.

George, H.V., 1972. Common Errors in Language Learning, Rowley, Ma.: Newbury House.

Li and Thompson. 1976. draft.

McLaughlin, Barry. 1978. 'The monitor model; Some methodological considerations', Language Learning 28: 309-32.

Rutherford, William E., 1981. Language typology and language transfer.

Selinker, Larry. 1972. Interlanguage, IRAL X/3.

Schacher, Jacquelyn and Rutherford, William. 1979. Discourse function language transfer, Working papers in Bilingualism 19.

Schumann, John. 1977. 'Second language acquisition; The pidginization hypothesis', Language Learning 26: 256-71.

Tarone, Elaine. 1979. 'Interlanguage as chameleon', Language Learning 29: 181-91.